

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of preparing a hard copy by forming a transparent coating layer on a recording medium in areas where image has been recorded, comprising the steps of:  
causing clear droplets to fly from a recording head toward said areas where image has been recorded;  
curing said droplets while they are in flight; and  
depositing said cured droplets in said image-recorded areas of said recording medium so as to form said coating layer.
2. The method according to claim 1, wherein a curing intensity of said curing step that is to be performed on said droplets is adjusted in accordance with the image as recorded on said recording medium.
3. The method according to claim 2, wherein an adjustment of the intensity of said curing step that is to be performed on said droplets is for changing viscosity of said droplets as they are deposited on said recording medium.
4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the surface

roughness of said coating layer that is formed of said droplets as they have been deposited and hardened is adjusted by changing the viscosity of said droplets as they are deposited on said recording medium.

5. The method according to claim 3, wherein the intensity is adjusted for changing the viscosity lower as an image area to be coated by the cured droplets has a higher recording density.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein said droplets contain a thermosetting resin material and said curing step comprises applying infrared radiation to said droplets while they are in flight.